Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?

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On 7 October 2001, a US-led military coalition launched Operation Enduring Freedom against Afghanistan's Taliban government, toppling it after just two months of fighting. United Nations Security Council resolution 1386 established an International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) on 20 December 2001 to help the Afghan Interim Authority maintain security in and around Kabul. In light of ISAF's relative success, Afghan President Hamid Karzai, UN officials, and others soon called for ISAF to expand its operations into the provinces. US officials were not interested, however, believing that a traditional peacekeeping approach would be ineffective in Afghanistan. US allies were unwilling to deploy large numbers of troops to patrol Afghanistan's remote cities and towns. A 2003 RAND study noted there were initially 18 to 20 peacekeepers per thousand people in Bosnia and Kosovo.[1] To achieve such a ratio in Afghanistan would have required deploying hundreds of thousands of troops in a country that has been historically wary of a heavy foreign presence.

During the summer of 2002, US officials developed the concept of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to spread the "ISAF effect," without expanding ISAF itself. First established in early 2003, PRTs consisted of 60 to 100 soldiers plus, eventually, Afghan advisors and representatives from civilian agencies like the US State Department, the US Agency for International Development, and the US Department of Agriculture. PRTs have the potential to become a model for future stabilization and reconstruction operations. Rep-

Report Documentation Page		*Form Approved* *OMB No. 0704-0188*

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE **2006**	2. REPORT TYPE	3. DATES COVERED **00-00-2006 to 00-00-2006**

4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE **Stabilization and Reconstruction in Afghanistan: Are PRTs a Model or a Muddle?**	5a. CONTRACT NUMBER
	5b. GRANT NUMBER
	5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER
6. AUTHOR(S)	5d. PROJECT NUMBER
	5e. TASK NUMBER
	5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER

7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) **U.S. Army War College,ATTN: Parameters,122 Forbes Avenue,Carlisle,PA,17013-5238**	8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER

9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)	10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)
	11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)

12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT
Approved for public release; distribution unlimited

13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES
PARAMETERS, Winter 2005-06

14. ABSTRACT

15. SUBJECT TERMS

16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT **unclassified**	b. ABSTRACT **unclassified**	c. THIS PAGE **unclassified**	**Same as Report (SAR)**	**15**	

Standard Form 298 (Rev. 8-98)
Prescribed by ANSI Std Z39-18

resentatives from more than a dozen countries are now participating in 22 PRTs to enhance security, reconstruction, and the reach of the Afghan central government. PRTs have achieved great success in building support for the US-led coalition and respect for the Afghan government. They have played important roles in everything from election support to school-building to disarmament to mediating factional conflicts. Despite their potential and record of success, however, PRTs always have been a bit of a muddle. Inconsistent mission statements, unclear roles and responsibilities, ad hoc preparation, and, most important, limited resources have confused potential partners and prevented PRTs from having a greater effect on Afghanistan's future.[2]

This article will first review the strategic context in which PRTs operate, namely stabilization and reconstruction operations. Second, it will describe the PRT concept and its history. Third, the article will assess the success of the PRTs against three criteria: coordination, relationship-building, and capacity-building. Enhancing local security is also a key measure of success, but as this article will discuss, PRTs achieve this goal primarily through their relationships and capacity-building efforts. The assessments in this article are based only on broad observations and discussions. They are not meant as definitive judgments but rather as a starting point for thinking about how to make such assessments more rigorous in the future. Finally, the article will conclude with some recommendations for how the PRTs should evolve in Afghanistan and how the PRTs can be a model for future operations.

Stabilization and Reconstruction

The US Marine Corps' draft *Small Wars* manual observes: "Military planners might choose to consider the initial conventional combat phase as the shaping phase, rather than the decisive phase. . . . [I]f our political objectives can only be accomplished after a successful stability phase, then the stability phase is, de facto, the decisive phase."[3] Events in Afghanistan and Iraq illustrate that the stability phase of war is often more challenging than the combat phase. America's inability to achieve its goals in both countries more quickly has sparked much-needed debates about how America and the world should prepare for and conduct stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) activities.

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S&R is an evolving concept but perhaps should be viewed as the intersection of military-led stability operations and civilian-led reconstruction activities. Army doctrine states that stability operations include counterinsurgency operations, peace operations, security assistance, and combating terrorism.[4] Reconstruction activities include all aspects of improving governance: training civil administrators, improving essential services and public safety, supporting civil society and self-determination, and promoting the rule of law and economic development. S&R is essentially where stability operations and reconstruction activities are applied in a coordinated fashion to failed or fragile states experiencing internal conflict or international military intervention.

It is difficult to conceive of a US-led major combat operation in the 21st century that would not require a significant S&R effort. S&R is not just about post-major-combat environments like Afghanistan and Iraq, however. The post-9/11 strategic environment has resulted in a significant focus on stabilization and reconstruction from the Philippines to Yemen to Georgia to the Horn of Africa. Conflict and a lack of good governance breed organized crime and extremism, which are key enablers of terrorism. Thus, the United States is helping partner countries resolve internal conflicts, defeat insurgencies, and eliminate "ungoverned spaces"—regions within a country where the rule of law is weak—using military advisory missions, security sector reform and training programs, intelligence cooperation, and reconstruction and development assistance.

As Steven Metz and Raymond Millen argue: "Aggression flowing from internal instability thus demands the actual transformation of an unstable or aggressive state into one which is both stable and willing to adhere to the norms of the international community. This is a revolutionary idea."[5] The quote from the US Marine Corps' *Small Wars* manual at the beginning of this section is also fairly revolutionary, challenging the traditional linkage between "combat operations" and "decisive operations." And then there's the Defense Science Board's 2004 Summer Study "Transition to and from Hostilities," which asserts that more personnel are required in-theater for stabilization and reconstruction than for large-scale hostilities.[6]

Clearly, S&R has gained prominence in strategic debates. The US government has been taking steps to better prepare for future S&R missions. The military has improved its doctrine and is shifting personnel billets to relieve the pressure on high-demand, low-density assets like civil affairs and military police. The State Department has established a Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization and plans to establish a cadre of civilians with reconstruction expertise (e.g. education, legal, and engineering) in both active and reserve status.[7] In addition to force structure and organizational

changes, there are proposals for improving S&R resource allocations, education and training, interagency planning, and mechanisms for multinational coordination. Finally, a number of organizations inside and outside government have laid out the components of S&R—what needs to be done. The Center for Strategic & International Studies and the Association of the United States Army (AUSA) post-conflict reconstruction reports provide perhaps the best framework for a generic S&R program. The reports include sections on security (including control of belligerents, reform of local security institutions), justice and reconciliation (law enforcement, human rights), social and economic well-being (public health, shelter, markets), and governance and participation (elections, civil society).[8]

Less prominent in discussions to date are analyses of *how* to implement stabilization and reconstruction. This article attempts to help fill that gap, specifically by looking at one tool, the PRTs in Afghanistan. In doing this, it will ask whether PRTs, in particular, are an effective tool for implementing S&R on the ground. How have the PRTs performed when measured against three critical S&R tasks: coordination, relationship-building, and capacity-building?

Unquestionably coordination is crucial, but how to make it happen is the real challenge. A typical model for S&R coordination involves fairly strong unity of effort among military forces operating in a region, with civilian agencies operating primarily from the host-nation capital and using nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) or contractors to execute projects in the field. The UN might conduct meetings in major towns, but most S&R coordination takes place in the capital.

Strong relationships between S&R implementers and local leaders and communities are no less critical to mission success. This does not mean catering to local warlords, but rather understanding local leadership structures, partnering with good actors, and marginalizing or changing the behavior of bad actors. Determining good and bad actors and subsequently influencing them are, without a doubt, among the most difficult aspects of S&R, yet these tasks are often done haphazardly.

Finally, building the capacity of the host nation to provide security and good governance for its citizens is the single most important aspect of S&R. Everyone acknowledges the importance of capacity-building, but S&R programs and resource allocations seldom reflect it. Donor countries will expend significant resources to deploy their own troops but are less generous about training a host nation's security forces. As a result, too few soldiers and police are trained, or the training is too short. On the civilian side, most S&R missions include advisor programs for the central government. But large-scale governance and civil administrator training in the provinces is rare.

PRTs in Afghanistan: All Things to All People?

From their earliest incarnation, PRTs had a role in stabilization and re-construction—but what kind of role? The PRTs were originally called Joint Regional Teams. It was President Karzai who asked that they be called PRTs. "Warlords rule regions; governors rule provinces," he said. Moreover, President Karzai wanted to emphasize the importance of reconstruction for these teams.

PRTs were born in an environment of change, so it is not surprising that their mission and structure evolved over time. Flexibility was a key aspect of the PRTs' effectiveness, but at times flexibility seemed to be a euphemism for ambiguity. A November 2002 briefing from the Coalition headquarters planning cell was vague in its description of the mission: (1) "Monitor . . ." (2) "Assist . . . coordinating bodies" (3) "Facilitate cooperation. . . ." The impression was that the PRTs were to be observing and facilitating everything—being all things to all people—but not actually accomplishing anything vital to the political or military missions. The initial PRT organizational chart focused on the military structure, with a dotted line connecting to "Afghan Government, government organizations (e.g. USAID), State Department, NGOs, and UN" lumped together at the far end of the page.[9] Later charts proposed integrating State and USAID, as well as the US Departments of Justice, Education, Agriculture, and other agencies. For many months, competing PRT organizational charts floated around Washington, US Central Command, and Coalition headquarters.

In their first months of life, PRTs struggled to be relevant to the broader political and military mission, but suffered from limited resources and civil-military tensions. PRT military personnel used DOD's Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civic Aid (OHDACA) funds to build schools, dig wells, repair clinics, and so forth. But OHDACA was limited in its application to basic humanitarian projects, identical to those performed by NGOs. OHDACA authorities did not provide the PRTs with the flexibility to implement projects like repairing major infrastructure, building police stations or prisons, and training or equipping security forces. The teams had no other resources for projects. Their resources for operations were completely inadequate. Communications at the PRTs were poor, and their few vehicles came straight from a post-apocalyptic Mad Max movie: a motley assortment of dirty, duct-taped SUVs. High demand for vehicles, communications, and dedicated military personnel limited the ability of civilians—who relied on the military's vehicles and security escorts—to pursue their own objectives.

A vague mission, vague roles, and insufficient resources created significant civil-military tensions at the PRTs, particularly over mission priorities. Many of the State Department personnel and other civilians on the team

had military experience, but this did not reduce civil-military tensions. On the contrary, some of the harshest criticisms of the military personnel on PRTs came from retired military members of the team. During one of the author's trips to a PRT, a member of the team confided, "Those briefing slides look good, but this place is completely dysfunctional." Civilians complained that the military personnel on the PRTs were reluctant to support them and treated them as outsiders. Military personnel were discouraged that civilians showed up with no resources, little authority vested in them by the State Department or Embassy Kabul, and sometimes little understanding of their role. PRTs often had only one civilian, frequently a junior-level person compared to the lieutenant colonel level of the PRT commander. That civilian was sometimes on a 90-day visit, which was not enough time to develop situational awareness, much less play any kind of leadership role. Military personnel frequently asked about finding civilian agency representatives with technical skills who could assist in reconstructing Afghan agriculture, education, health care, and justice systems, but often had to make due with a junior-level diplomat and a busy USAID representative.

After these first months of limited operations, the PRT mission began to coalesce around three basic objectives: enhancing security, strengthening the reach of the Afghan central government, and facilitating reconstruction. Though they could not simply "create security," as some observers demanded, they eventually helped defuse factional fighting, supported deployments of the Afghan National Army and police, conducted patrols, and reinforced security efforts during the disarming of militias. They strengthened the reach of the central government through Afghan government representatives serving on the PRTs and by providing monitoring, registration, and security support for events like the constitutional convention (the "Loya Jirga") and elections. They facilitated reconstruction by funding projects like school repairs or, more important over time, by helping the State Department, USAID, and Department of Agriculture representatives at the PRTs to implement civilian-funded projects.

Toward the end of 2003, civilians began to play a stronger role in the PRTs. Most PRTs would soon have one representative each from State, USAID, and Agriculture. One-year tours were planned to provide continuity and to allow time for relationship-building. Coordination improved between military-led PRT activities and civilian projects underway in a PRT's area of operations. Most important, civilians at the PRTs obtained access to State Department Economic Support Funds, which could support projects that OHDACA could not.

Not everyone supported the evolution of the PRTs beyond military-funded quick impact projects, however. Some complained the PRTs were be-

coming a "Motel 6" for civilians involved in disarmament, police training, and economic reconstruction programs. One senior officer in Bagram complained that the PRTs were becoming a "Christmas tree that everyone wants to hang their ornaments on." Some of these complaints were justified, as US government officials at times called for PRTs to take on new missions without offering additional resources. Ideally, the PRTs would play the role of catalysts for a range of S&R efforts, with civilians not just advising the military, but using the PRTs to help them accomplish their own missions as well.

As they got a better focus and a stronger contingent of civilian representation, the PRTs began to have a far greater impact. Lieutenant General David Barno recognized the importance of the PRTs when he took over command of Coalition forces in November 2003. He sped up the establishment of new PRTs, increasing their number from eight to 14 in less than a year. He tried to change the attitude that PRTs were a "civil affairs thing" separate from the main effort by grouping PRTs under the control of regional brigade commanders. Barno also changed the strategic context in ways that made PRTs more effective. He adopted a more classic counterinsurgency strategy for his maneuver elements, dispatching units as small as 40 soldiers to live in Afghan villages rather than conducting raids from the large coalition base at Bagram. He adjusted the chain of command by putting a senior colonel in charge of all the forces and PRTs in each of five areas of responsibility (including a NATO area). Barno also moved his military headquarters to Kabul to facilitate the integration of military, political, and economic efforts.

NATO recognized the utility of the PRTs and used them to extend ISAF operations—previously restricted to Kabul—to northern Afghanistan, operating five PRTs by fall 2004. ISAF operations extended into western Afghanistan in the summer of 2005 through four additional PRTs. Because PRTs emphasized flexibility in approach, their structure and operations could vary depending on their location and national leadership. ISAF's adoption of the PRT model brought much-needed additional personnel and funding from other governments to the effort, as well as the greater perceived legitimacy that greater multinational participation carries. Such participation also created challenges in maintaining a common mission and coordinating an increasingly diverse group of stakeholders.

NATO, operating in the more secure north and west, where NGOs and other reconstruction actors have been able to operate more freely than in the Coalition area of operations, has focused more on the role of PRTs in supporting a secure environment and on security sector reform (police, army, judiciary) than on assistance projects.[10] The UK-led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif takes pains to distance itself from the reconstruction component of the PRT mission: "There is a common misconception that the PRT is all about the physical recon-

struction of Afghanistan. This is not the way we do business. Our concept of operations and development priorities are primarily concerned with: a. Government Institution Building and, b. Security Sector Reform."[11] The German-led PRT in Konduz actively and skillfully implemented assistance projects but kept a strict separation between the military and civilian components of their PRT, with the civilians reporting directly to Berlin. Some other European countries at times expressed concern that military activities would somehow "taint" softer, gentler civilian activities, as if the two groups were not pursuing the same overall mission.[12] In order to ensure that PRT activities were integrated with Afghanistan's broader political, military, and economic goals, the Coalition supported the establishment of the PRT Executive Steering Committee, chaired by the Afghan Minister of Interior and co-chaired by the Coalition forces commander and the ISAF commander.

Assessing the PRTs

The most common measure of success cited to the author by PRT representatives was (no kidding) "the number of smiling Afghan children." Anecdotal evidence abounds of the positive impact PRTs have had on changing the attitudes of local Afghans, as villagers went from throwing rocks at PRT convoys to smiling and waving as they saw the benefits of a PRT presence in their region. In areas of Taliban influence in southern and eastern Afghanistan, Coalition forces under Lieutenant General Barno highlighted the cooperation from locals in identifying weapon caches as another measure of success.

Obviously, however, the PRTs needed a more systematic approach to measuring their success. The amount of OHDACA funds spent and the number of assistance projects completed (e.g. schools, clinics) were easily quantified, but they were a poor metric. These projects were effective only to the extent that they improved the ability of the PRTs to influence local events. Influence is extremely hard to quantify, but it must be assessed nevertheless. The PRTs have attempted to develop useful public opinion polls, unfortunately without success thus far. As mentioned earlier, three good measures for PRT performance should be how well they improve tactical-level coordination, build relationships, and build capacity. Absent clear metrics, it is still possible to begin to assess success along these parameters on the basis of the information that is available.

Civil-military coordination was a challenge for the PRTs. Military commanders and civilian officials were not always sure about the role civilians should play on the PRTs. Regarding the US-led PRTs, military units deployed with limited preparation for working with civilian government officials. Civilians deployed in an ad hoc manner, with only a few meetings at the Pentagon and around Washington, D.C., for their preparation. The civilian and military

members of the UK-led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, by comparison, trained and deployed together and understood that their mission was to support both military and civilian objectives. One example of the results of these different approaches was that while the Mazar PRT made it a priority to support civilian-led missions like police training, disarmament, and judicial reform efforts, the PRT in Gardez initially resisted State Department requests for police training assistance. Civil-military coordination on the US-led PRTs has certainly improved over time, but limited pre-deployment preparation, strained resources, and confusion over priorities continue.

Despite these challenges, the Provincial Reconstruction Teams have been one of the few efforts in Afghanistan to approach civil and military S&R tasks in a coordinated fashion at the tactical level. Military patrols, demining, school repairs (with either military or civilian oversight), UN assessments, police training, and other tasks all take place within a single province. The diversity of nations, organizations, and personalities struggling to implement their particular programs impedes even the most concerted efforts to pull things together. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan uses regional offices to share information, but real coordination is more than information sharing, it is integrated action. Integration among national, functional, and civil-military stovepipes generally occurs only in the host-nation's capital, at best. PRTs, however, have achieved at least some unity of effort in the field by serving as a hub for both military and civilian activities and by closely aligning their efforts with the Afghan central government.

As with coordination, the UK-led PRT in Mazar-e Sharif was particularly effective in building relationships. The PRT commander in September 2003 had extensive diagrams detailing frequently-changing factional loyalties and interactions. PRT members traveled extensively through their area of operations. When tensions rose, PRT members stepped into the middle of the action, sometimes physically placing themselves between armed groups. Their efforts prevented factional fighting from breaking out or escalating on a number of occasions. In contrast, the German-led PRT in Konduz could travel only within a 30-kilometer radius and was accused by UN and NGO staff of avoiding areas where factional tensions were high. PRT members took a delegation (including the author) to visit the Konduz governor in February 2004, and described their close relationship with him. They did not seem aware, however, that the governor would be replaced the next day by the central government.

PRTs generally did a good job of engaging with local communities and meeting provincial and district officials. Unfortunately, short tours of duty (often six months, but even as little as three months in a couple of cases) made it difficult for PRT members to understand local politics and distinguish relatively good from relatively bad actors. Many PRT members noted that

"Events in Afghanistan and Iraq illustrate that the stability phase of war is often more challenging than the combat phase."

just as they were starting to gain some influence, it was time to transition out. In 2004, the United States changed the length of their tours to one year in order to address this problem. Other countries should follow suit.

The other challenge for the PRTs in building relationships was balancing carrots and sticks, both of which were quite limited. The US-led PRTs used DOD's OHDACA funds as their primary carrot until 2004, when State and USAID began to provide funds for projects tied to the PRTs. DOD also obtained Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) funds in 2004, a more flexible source of funds used first in Iraq. More diverse sources of funds were helpful in allowing the PRTs to address a broader range of local needs, such as repairing police stations and jails and purchasing police equipment. Ironically, the military's lack of funds beyond OHDACA initially required it to focus on humanitarian assistance projects, while the State Department drew more on resources for security-related efforts like police training and disarmament. The UK military relied on its government's Department for International Development for funding assistance projects. While this limited the military's freedom of action, it may well have been a blessing in disguise. UK military personnel coordinated closely with their civilian agency counterparts in order to access their funding. They also tended to focus more on building relationships based on security-related cooperation with local authorities.

PRTs could, in extremis, call on the ultimate stick—bombs from above—but military airstrikes lack subtlety, and even the threat of them was generally not helpful for day-to-day interactions. PRT members relied primarily on trying to reward good behavior, but there was one stick President Karzai used that the PRTs could reinforce, as appropriate, in the murky world of provincial diplomacy: job insecurity. Karzai was not shy about firing ineffective or corrupt governors and police chiefs. PRTs were in some cases instrumental in supporting leadership changes, and in other cases their interactions with local officials seemed only remotely tied to the central government. For example, the PRT in Gardez helped the governor, a trusted appointee of President Karzai, to transfer the corrupt provincial police chief to Kabul. When the new police chief arrived with a well-trained police unit to

assist in the transfer process, the presence of PRT soldiers demonstrated US support for the central government and helped prevent a firefight between the newcomers and the departing police chief's private militia.[13] PRTs were most effective in relationship-building when they could both reward cooperative local partners and hold uncooperative partners accountable. The appointment of an Afghan Ministry of Interior official to each PRT in 2004 was particularly helpful in improving the ability of the PRTs to build relationships and strengthen the reach of the central government.

With regard to capacity-building, NGOs frequently criticized PRT assistance projects in general (though never citing specific examples) as unsustainable and lacking in community input, but these criticisms were overstated. PRTs did an excellent job involving local communities, hiring local workers, and sometimes trying to incorporate training components into their various projects. They also worked to serve as liaisons with the central government and as advisors to local leaders, to the extent personnel and transportation constraints allowed. Moreover, PRTs were consistent in their message that their activities were in support of the Afghan government, and they went to great lengths to obtain Afghan guidance and involvement from both the national and local levels.

Despite initial reluctance among some PRT commanders, the PRTs grew increasingly effective in supporting security-sector-related capacity-building in the provinces. As the Afghan National Army began to deploy with Coalition forces, PRTs often facilitated their deployments. The PRTs also supported many officials and contractors implementing police training and disarmament projects and even conducted some ad hoc security force training. PRTs worked closely with provincial and district police chiefs to help them prioritize their many resource requirements and to share information on illegal checkpoints, narcotics trafficking, and other criminal activity. The PRTs will likely play a supporting role in the US government's expanded police training efforts. Congress provided $360 million in fiscal year 2005 supplemental funding for these efforts, which include a mentoring program based on the Coalition's successful Afghan National Army embedded trainer program.[14] It would be beneficial if the PRTs can also play a role in supporting judicial capacity-building programs, which the international community has implemented far too slowly.

There is one area of capacity-building that has enormous potential but has enjoyed little attention from the PRTs or from any other source: governance, specifically provincial administrator training and civil society development. Effective security forces must operate in the context of good governance for the United States to truly declare success in Afghanistan. The UN, United States, and other donors are implementing some training and mentoring pro-

grams at the central government level, but at the provincial and district level there are teacher training programs and very little else. In the end, the central government extends its power more through local bureaucrats and governance councils than through the Afghan National Army or even the police. Rudimentary, short-duration training and organizational support would provide local officials with greater skills and professionalism and would give them a stronger connection to the central government.

Broadly assessed against these measures, the PRTs are clearly having a positive impact in Afghanistan. But this assessment is still only partially better than the "smiles on Afghan faces" methodology. More robust metrics are needed to more fully determine the effectiveness of the PRT program, individual PRTs, and specific PRT initiatives. Such metrics are under development, but this effort, too, is a bit of a muddle. As PRTs cross programmatic and organizational boundaries, different groups are working on ways to measure the effectiveness of the PRTs. One hopes the PRT Executive Steering Committee will be able to integrate their work into a single useful tool for all PRTs.

Finally, for such an assessment to be truly useful, it must not only measure the effectiveness of individual PRTs, but it must look at the relevance of the PRT program to the overall S&R mission. Will PRTs eventually be viewed as having made a small but positive contribution, or will they be seen as an integral component of S&R in Afghanistan? Unless their civilian component (personnel and funding) is strengthened and the number of PRTs or their reach is increased dramatically, the answer will probably be the former rather than the latter. While civilians now play a larger role on the PRTs, they still lack adequate resources and too often play more of an advisory role than a leadership role. Moreover, even after the addition of four PRTs in the summer of 2005, there were only 13 Coalition and nine ISAF PRTs. Given Afghanistan's size (almost as large as Texas), brutal geography, factional complexities, and continued insecurity, PRTs should have a presence in all but a couple of its 34 provinces, plus in a number of high-priority districts.

Past experiences with insurgencies illustrate the importance of a highly dispersed, light footprint. For example, to defeat the Philippine insurrection from 1899 to 1902, the United States used over 500 small garrisons (increased from 53 in 1900) throughout the Philippines.[15] The personnel from these garrisons lived and worked in local communities, fought insurgents, built rapport with the populace, and implemented civil works projects.[16] The US military, with a field strength of 24,000 to 42,000 plus a large number of Philippine auxiliaries, defeated an insurgent force estimated at 80,000 to 100,000.[17]

Robert Komer's seminal RAND report on Vietnam highlights the effectiveness of the CORDS program (Civil Operations and Revolutionary

Development Support), which deployed unified civil-military teams to all 250 districts and 44 provinces in South Vietnam—a country much smaller geographically and with a slightly smaller population than Afghanistan. The CIA's controversial Operation Phoenix component aside, CORDS looked in many other ways like a better staffed, better funded, more effective PRT program. As is the case with the PRTs, Komer notes that CORDS "wrote the field manual as it went along." CORDS used elaborate evaluation systems and established a Washington-based training center to train CORDS advisors. Though overshadowed by what Komer calls "the overwhelmingly conventional and militarized nature" of the US effort in Vietnam, CORDS had a dramatic impact on weakening the Viet Cong insurgency.[18] While the US government struggled to provide eight agriculture experts to the PRTs, about 100 American agricultural advisors served in Vietnam. In fact, at one time there were 6,464 military, 1,137 civilian, and 223 third-country advisors stationed in Vietnam.[19] Critics might argue that there has been enough progress in Afghanistan to preclude the need for such a large program. Regardless, there has certainly been insufficient attention given to past experiments like CORDS and the lessons they might provide to present and future S&R missions.

Conclusion

When measured against criteria such as coordination, relationship-building, and capacity-building, PRTs have shown tremendous improvements from their muddled early days. Nevertheless, the very nature of the PRTs—multinational, civil-military, multifunctional—and the dynamic, insecure environment in which they operate probably ensure that there will always be at least a little confusion about what exactly the PRTs are. A little confusion, however, is preferable to rigid guidelines that might eliminate the flexibility that makes the PRTs adaptable and, therefore, well-suited to an S&R environment. The PRTs are generally on the right track, but a number of improvements are necessary for them to evolve into a model for future S&R missions.

First, there need to be far more PRTs, or else the existing PRTs must be able to extend their operational reach farther through satellite locations (mini-PRTs) in key districts throughout Afghanistan. Establishing 22 PRTs in the three and a half years after the collapse of the Taliban government is a snail's pace when dealing with an insurgency. Each PRT, moreover, must be equipped with the best communications and transportation assets and with plentiful funds for a diverse array of projects. The PRTs need a broad range of development and rule-of-law civilian expertise. Civilians must have the authority and resources to play a leadership role. The PRTs cannot become a

driving force in the stabilization and reconstruction effort unless their reach extends deep into the Afghan countryside and they are prepared to take on a wider spectrum of S&R requirements.

Second, civil-military coordination on the PRTs must improve. The 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Act improved jointness among the US Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corps by redesigning how military personnel were organized, trained, commanded, and employed. The Center for Strategic and International Studies report "Beyond Goldwater Nichols" argues that the post-9/11 security environment "demands that we extend our notion of 'jointness' beyond the military services to the interagency and coalition levels."[20] PRTs have the potential to serve as a showcase for tactical interagency jointness. The UK PRT in Mazar-e Sharif, whose civilian and military members were trained, deployed, and supported as a team, is a good example of this concept in action. The CORDS program in Vietnam integrated civilian and military efforts on a larger scale, with soldiers serving directly under civilians, and vice versa, at all levels.[21]

Improvements in this area begin not at the PRTs but in Washington, D.C., and at government and military facilities around the United States. Military and civilian personnel should be educated, trained, and equipped for stabilization and reconstruction missions in tandem, and not six weeks before deployment but over their entire careers. The State Department's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, appointed in 2004, is working on improving the ability of civilian agencies to train, plan, and deploy for S&R missions side-by-side with their military counterparts.[22]

Third, PRTs need to improve their ability to measure the effectiveness of their relationship-building efforts. Evaluation teams made up of international and Afghan investigators should try to determine whether or not the PRTs have a good understanding of local power structures and whether they are effectively influencing good and bad actors. PRTs must determine what activities have the greatest impact in particular locales through a more rigorous analysis of cause (e.g. clinic repair, interactions with community leaders) and effect (e.g. reduction in rocket attacks).

Finally, the PRTs should place greater emphasis on capacity-building programs that improve local governance and help tie local officials and institutions to the central government. For example, the Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq set up governance teams in all 15 of Iraq's non-Kurdish provinces to create or improve local governing councils. USAID developed governance teams for earlier S&R efforts in Haiti and Kosovo.

S&R operations will continue to challenge the United States and its allies in the future. There will never be a one-size-fits-all approach that describes exactly how to implement stabilization and reconstruction efforts.

But PRTs may provide a good starting point for those developing the tools to achieve political and military success in future missions, whether they involve counter-insurgency, peace enforcement, or even ungoverned spaces.

NOTES

1. James Dobbins et al., *America's Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq* (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 2003), p. 151.

2. Many points in this article are based on the author's participation in meetings from 2002 to 2004 in Washington, D.C.; Tampa, Fla.; Brussels, Belgium; Ft. Bragg, N.C.; and Kabul, Bagram, Mazar-e Sharif, Bamian, Gardez, Kandahar, and Kunduz in Afghanistan.

3. US Marine Corps, *Small Wars* (draft), January 2004, p. 4, http://www.smallwars.quantico.usmc.mil/SWM/Small%20Wars%20Draft%20Web%202.pdf.

4. US Department of the Army, *Stability Operations and Support Operations*, Field Manual 3-07 (Washington: Department of the Army, 2003), p. I-2, http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/fm3_07.pdf.

5. Steven Metz and Raymond Millen, "Intervention, Stabilization, and Transformation Operations: The Role of Landpower in the New Strategic Environment," *Parameters*, 35 (Spring 2005) 42.

6. US Department of Defense, Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, Defense Science Board, 2004 Summer Study, "Transition to and from Hostilities," December 2004, p. 7, http://www.acq.osd.mil/dsb/reports/2004-12-DSB_SS_Report_Final.pdf.

7. US Department of State, Media Note, Office of the Spokesman, 24 May 2005, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2005/46721.htm.

8. Center for Strategic & International Studies and the Association of the U.S. Army, "Play to Win: Final Report of the Bi-Partisan Commission on Post-Conflict Reconstruction," January 2003, http://www.csis.org/isp/pcr/playtowin.pdf, and "Post-Conflict Reconstruction Task Framework," May 2002, http://www.csis.org/isp/pcr/framework.pdf. For a comprehensive mission matrix for stabilization and reconstruction in Iraq, see Conrad C. Crane and W. Andrew Terrill, *Reconstructing Iraq: Insights, Challenges, and Missions for Military Forces in a Post-Conflict Scenario* (Carlisle, Pa.: US Army War College, Strategic Studies Institute, February 2003), pp. 62-72, http://www.carlisle.army.mil/ssi/pubs/display.cfm?PubID=182.

9. Coalition Joint Task Force-180, CJ5 briefing "The Joint Regional Team Concept," 21 November 2002.

10. NATO, "NATO in Afghanistan Factsheet," 21 February 2005, http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/040628-factsheet.htm.

11. NATO, "Provincial Reconstruction Team North (West)," http://www.hrf.tu.nato.int/isaf/public/prt1.php?prt=north.

12. The assessments of how some European countries approached PRTs are based on the author's 2003-2004 meetings with US and non-US military officers and civilian officials in Washington, D.C.; Tampa, Fla.; Brussels, Belgium; and throughout Afghanistan.

13. Craig T. Cobane, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Security Assistance: Comments on an Evolving Concept," *The DISAM Journal of International Security Assistance Management* (forthcoming).

14. Kenneth Katzman, *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy* (Washington: Congressional Research Service, 31 August 2005), p. 32, http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/row/RL30588.pdf.

15. Timothy K. Deady, "Lessons from a Successful Counterinsurgency: The Philippines, 1899-1902," *Parameters*, 35 (Spring 2005), 57.

16. Ibid.

17. Glenn A. May, *A Past Recovered* (Manila: New Day Publishers, 1987), p. 152, quoted in Brian McAllister Linn, *The Philippine War 1899-1902* (Lawrence: Univ. of Kansas Press, 2000), p. 325.

18. R. W. Komer, *Bureaucracy Does Its Thing: Institutional Constraints on U.S.-GVN Performance in Vietnam*, Report R-967-ARPA (Santa Monica, Calif.: RAND Corporation, 1972), pp. vi, 114-17. Republished as *Bureaucracy at War* in 1985. For more on CORDS and effective counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam, see Lewis Sorley, *A Better War: The Unexamined Victories and Final Tragedy of America's Last Years in Vietnam* (New York: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1999), and Andrew Krepinevich, *The Army and Vietnam* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1986).

19. Allen Bjergo, "USAID Adviser's Story: Sowing the Seeds of Goodwill," *Vietnam*, October 1999, p. 1.

20. Clark Murdock et al., *Beyond Goldwater-Nichols: Defense Reform for a New Strategic Era* (Washington: Center for Strategic and International Studies 2004), p. 61, http://www.csis.org/isp/bgn/.

21. Komer, p. 115.

22. US Department of State, Ambassador Carlos Pascual, "Strengthening U.S. Reconstruction and Stabilization Capabilities," 20 October 2004, http://www.state.gov/s/crs/rls/rm/37430.htm.